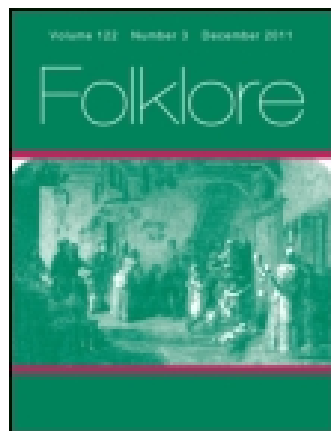


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## Scraps of Scottish Folklore

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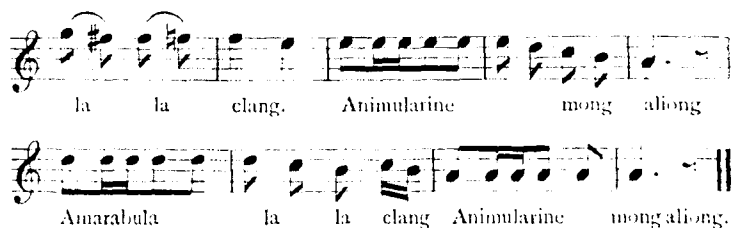
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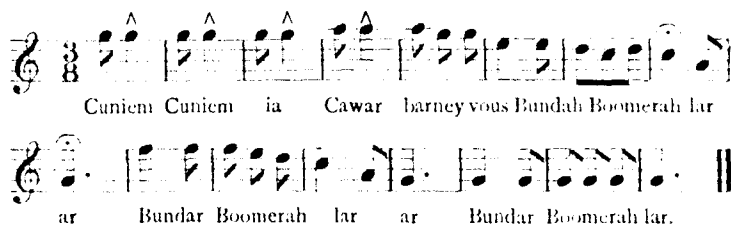
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## No. IV.



## SCRAPS OF SCOTTISH FOLKLORE, I.

*Aberdeenshire.*

ON two occasions of marriage on Lower Deeside, one being that of the uncle of my informant, forty-five years ago, the bridegroom was followed from the place in which the wedding took place by a procession of couples, the first pair of which were two young men, who walked close behind the newly married man holding behind him by the upper corners a sheet or other white cloth at about the height of his shoulders. They followed thus for a distance, keeping the cloth in the same position as if they were guarding him from a draught. Was this to prevent his shadow from being trodden upon?

About 60 years ago, an old man living on Lower Deeside had an attack of a feverish affection locally known as "the sleeping fever," and his wife took a number of stones and heated them red hot in the ashes of a low peat fire. She then carried them in a pot still surrounded by glowing embers to the ford, and dropped them in one by one. The ford carried the road to the

churchyard through the stream, and my informant declares that this was a necessary condition to success.

The affairs of a small farmer in Crathie (West Aberdeenshire) fifty years ago were in a bad way. There was disease among his stock and ill-health in his household. A friend who came to sympathize with the man noticed that the barnyard fowls were mostly of the black Minorca breed. As soon as he noted the fact he advised his friend to get rid of the last one of them, and to supply their places by white-feathered birds,—an advice which the farmer followed as speedily as possible. Soon things began to mend, and in a short time all was prosperous. Neither argument nor sarcasm could thereafter move the old man from his faith in the virtue of his “white birds.”

Durris, by Aberdeen.

A. MACDONALD.

*Argyllshire.*

A pair of scissors is a lucky present to receive; it means “We part to meet again.”

If a pair of scissors, a knife, or a needle falls to the floor and sticks in an upright position, an unexpected guest will arrive ere long.

A needle broken in two while sewing brings good fortune to the wearer of the article sewn; if in three pieces an offer of marriage.

If you mend your clothes while wearing them, you will be slandered.<sup>1</sup>

If a girl's stocking wrinkles and refuses to remain “pulled up,” her lover is thinking of her.

To open an umbrella in the house brings misfortune.<sup>2</sup>

To put your shoes on the table signifies that you will quarrel with someone in the house.

A girl who sits on a table will never be married.

The lady who takes the last piece of bread on the plate will marry a rich man.

If a glass is accidentally broken during a marriage feast, it foretells misfortune to the bridal pair, but, when the health of bride and bridegroom is drunk, someone must throw a glass over their shoulder and break it “for luck.”

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Worcestershire*, vol. xx., p. 346.      <sup>2</sup> Cf. *Worcestershire*, vol. xx., p. 345.

When a glass breaks of itself, it signifies sudden death.

If two persons unintentionally begin to say the same thing at once, they will die together.

A robin coming into a house foretells death.

A cock crowing at the door brings hasty news.

Moths round a candle tell of a visit from a stranger.

Never let your tears drop on a corpse, or harm will befall you.

If a child be born with a caul, he or she will possess "second sight," and will never be drowned.

When I was a child we had a Highland gardener named Hugh Gillies, who told us many stories of fairies and kelpies, amongst which the tale that pleased us most was the following account how his mother, whom we remembered, was carried off by the fairies and kept by them for two months :—

When Hugh and his brothers and sisters were very young, their father and mother did not live very happily together, and another man, whom I will call Donald, often came to see their mother when their father was not at home, so that after a time people began to talk and someone told the father, who swore to punish his wife if he ever saw her speaking to Donald again. Soon after this the autumn market was held at the little village of Ford at the foot of Loch Awe. To this market Mrs. Gillies went, and the gossips saw her in earnest talk with Donald late in the afternoon. That night Mrs. Gillies did not return home, and her husband, believing that she had fled with Donald, walked from his home in Kilmartin Glen the twelve miles up Loch Awe side to Donald's home, but, though he searched the house and neighbourhood thoroughly, no trace of his wife could be found. He had the place and Donald carefully watched, but neither he nor the neighbours obtained the slightest clue to the whereabouts of the missing woman. Yet every night, after the household had gone to bed, she used to come and "red up" (tidy) the house, lay the fire ready for kindling the next morning, and brush and comb the children's hair. Hugh distinctly remembered being roused out of sleep night after night by his mother lifting him on to her lap while she "did his hair."

For nearly two months this state of affairs continued, and then,

one morning, as Gillies was passing through a big wood some way from his home, on his way to work, he heard his wife calling him. Following the sound of her voice he came to a large hazel bush, but, as he could see no one, he was turning away when from the middle of the bush came again his wife's voice. He felt very frightened, for he thought it must be her ghost, but he asked what she wanted. "I am tired," replied his wife, "and want to come home, but I am naked and cannot get quit of the fairies until I am clothed. Fetch me a smock to-morrow morning, and hang it on this bush just when the sun rises, but you must not try to see me, or the fairies will hide me so that I can never find my way back." The next morning at sunrise Gillies hung the smock on the bush, and, as he was turning away from the place, his wife called out to him to bring her another garment, and each morning she asked for something more until he had brought everything she needed. The last thing he brought was his wife's "mutch" (white cap), and, when he was turning to leave the wood, she called to him to go straight home at once, to speak to no one on the way, and not to turn his head either to the right or to the left. If he did as she told him, he would find her at home when he got there. Hugh always declared that his father ran nearly all the way home, and, when he reached the house, his wife was seated by the fire with the children round her, brushing the baby's hair and talking to them as if she had never been away at all. From that day she remained at home as other people did, but she would never tell anyone anything of how she had lived during those two months or of what she had seen or done while she lived with the "wee folk," and to the day of her death she was always looked upon as being "fey."

MINNIE CARTWRIGHT.

*Kirkcudbrightshire.*

In Castle-Douglas, it is believed that if two plants of cock's head<sup>1</sup> are put by a happy lover under a stone, and flower thereafter, he or she will be married; if not, not. An old woman of

<sup>1</sup> From the specimen forwarded this appears to be the plant *Plantago lanceolata*.

nearly eighty tells me that the same meadow plant is called "Adam and Eve" as well as "cock's heads," and is used to divine the name of the future partner as follows: There are two varieties, a light and a dark. A woman divines with the dark, and a man with the light variety. The plant is pulled up by the root, laid under a *slate* (slate or flat stone), and left all night. Next morning, if the root be examined, the initial letter will be found of the name of the future husband or wife.

Glasgow University.

H. M. B. REID.

*Lanarkshire.*

The following appeared under the heading "An Ancient Custom at Lanark" in the *Scotsman* for March 2nd, 1909:

"The ancient honoured custom known as 'Whuppity Scoorie' was celebrated by the youth of Lanark last night, and was witnessed by a crowd of several hundred people. The origin of the custom is unknown, but is generally supposed to herald the entrance of spring. From the months of October to February the town bell in the steeple is not tolled at six o'clock in the evening, but during the other months it rings at that hour daily. On the first day of March, when the bell is rung for the first time after its five months' silence, the boys of the town congregate at the Cross with a bonnet to which a piece of string is attached, and so soon as the first peal of the bell rings out the parish church is walked round three times, and thereafter a dash is made to meet the boys of New Lanark. On their meeting there is a stand-up fight, the weapons used being the stringed bonnets. This procedure was followed last night, and about seven o'clock the boys returned and paraded the principal streets singing their victorious refrain."

DAVID RORIE.

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